

on the national emergency with respect to Sudan that was declared in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997.

The White House,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

May 17, 2000.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Greenwich,
Connecticut
May 17, 2000

Scott, we ought to take this act on the road. [Laughter] I may do another video with you in it. [Laughter]

I want to say, first of all, I loved that introduction. [Laughter] And it meant more to me than you know. I hope most people do think I'm their kind of guy—but especially young people like him.

And I want to thank the Richmans for opening their beautiful, beautiful home to us. And I thank all the cochairs of this event, Ronni, Braith, Peter, Bob, and the others who worked on it. Thank you very much.

I thank Mayor Rendell for taking on this little part-time job of heading the Democratic Committee. [Laughter] And my old law school classmate Dick Blumenthal, I thank him for being here; and Mayor Malloy, Senator McDermott, and Barbara Kennelly, who now works in our administration at the Social Security Administration. You might want to talk to her about Social Security reform—[laughter]—give her all your ideas. And I thank Ed Marcus and the other folks who have come who've been active in Connecticut Democratic politics for a long time.

I would like to just make a few brief points. I know the hour is late, and I got to visit with a lot of you coming through.

Number one, whenever I'm anywhere now, I try not to miss a chance to say thank you. The people of Connecticut have been very good to me and to Al Gore, Hillary and Tipper. They gave us their electoral votes—you did twice, by a good margin the first time and a bigger one the second time. And I'm very, very grateful for that.

The second thing I would like to say is, believe it or not, even though things are going well, it's my opinion that the 2000 election is at least as important as the elections of 1992 and 1996, because in 2000 people will make

a very great decision, which is what to do about our good fortune and whether to ratify the policies that got us to this point and build on them in the future. It's a huge decision.

And if you listen to the debate, it's obvious that our friends in the other party, from the top down, hope that the American people don't think that's what they're supposed to do in this election. So they want to blur all these decisions, you know, and turn it into sort of a feel-good deal. And I mean, things are going along so well, who could mess it up, right? [Laughter] So just kind of, let's just, you know, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a little bit of the other thing.

So I'm glad you're here, and I thank you for your money, and we'll try to spend it well. But you're not done, because you've got to be good citizens between now and November, because I'm telling you, this election is just as important as the last two were.

I spent so much of the last 7½ years trying to turn the ship of state around, trying to build our bridge to the new century, trying to make sure things were going in the right direction. Well, now they are. And when I leave office, we will have paid off about \$355 billion of the national debt. And it was projected, when I took office, that this year the deficit would be about \$400 billion a year.

If I told you in 1992, "Vote for me, and before I get out of here, I'll give you at least 3 years of surpluses and pay off over \$350 billion of the debt, and I'll double investment in education and training at the same time," you would have said, "He seems like such a nice man, but he's slightly"—[laughter]—"deranged, and we'd better send him home."

So I'm grateful for what's going right. But it's just the beginning. And I go back to what I said in the State of the Union Address. It

is a stern test of a free people, not just how they behave when they're under the gun in depression and war but how they behave when all things seem possible and things are going very well. And the easiest thing to do is to let down and be distracted and be diverted and take the easy way out. This is the chance of a lifetime to build the future of our dreams for our children. But to do it, we have to make a lot of big decisions.

I think we have to decide to keep paying down the debt; to make extraordinary efforts to bring the benefits of the new economy to people and places that have been left behind, through incentives to invest in those places; to give every child a world-class education and access to college, and to those who need it, pre-school and after-school programs; to give working families access to affordable health care; to do more to help people balance work and family; to prove that you can grow the economy and improve the environment, not undermine it—and you can, by the way, in the new information age; to prove that we can be the safest big country in the world; to prove that we can build a country that brings us together instead of divides us at election time.

Now, I think this is important. This is big. I've worked real hard so you guys could do this when I was gone.

I'm not running for anything. Most days I'm okay about that. [Laughter] I had a great time at Hillary's nomination last night. She was great. And thank you, those of you that are helping her; I'm very grateful.

But you've got to think about this. That's what this election is about. Whether people think that's what it's about, enough, is another thing altogether. But I'm telling you, that's what this election is about. And 50 years from now, when people look back and write about this time, this is how this election year will be judged: What did we do with our prosperity? What did we do with a declining crime rate, welfare rolls cut in half, other social problems getting better? What did we do with this enormous period of good fortune, with the absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat to our security? What in the wide world did we do with it, with all these big challenges and opportunities sitting there right before our eyes?

It's not like we have to look around the corner—as the Irish say some people can do, can see around corners. You don't have to see

around corners. You know what the big challenges and opportunities facing this country are. That's the whole deal. That's the first thing I want to say.

The second thing I want to tell you is, I think that Vice President Gore is uniquely qualified to lead this country at this moment, because he understands the future and knows how to get us there. And I've listened very carefully to all the things that have been said, pro and con, in the last several weeks. And one of the most amazing things I have ever heard is people saying, "Well, you know, this guy won't take a tough position." He broke the tie in the budget. It passed by one vote. The Republicans, every one of them was against it—100 percent of them. They said we were going to bankrupt the country and we were going to wreck the economy. Now they say, "Oh, so what if we were wrong? So what if we quadrupled the debt? Please put us in control again." We won by a vote.

He broke the tie on gun control. We won by one vote in the Senate. We voted to close the gun show loophole; we voted to have a ban on large capacity ammunition clips being imported into this country; we voted to require child trigger locks in the Senate, by one vote.

He supported me when I gave financial aid to Mexico. You know what the poll was on that? Eighty-one to fifteen, don't do it. He supported me when we went into Bosnia. He supported me when we went into Kosovo. He supported me when we went into Haiti. He supported me when no administration had ever consistently taken on either the gun lobby or the tobacco lobby before.

So that's the first thing you need to know. Every tough decision I had to make that was unpopular in the short run but was right for the long run, he was there early in the do-it camp.

The second thing I want to say is, I'm a little bit of an amateur historian of this country. I know a little bit about other Presidencies and the institution of the Vice President. And you should know this. I work at night in a private office on President Grant's Cabinet table. Now, when Grant was President, when Lincoln was President, there were only seven Cabinet Departments. And they actually had a form of Cabinet government: the Cabinet met two or three times a week. And there are eight drawers around this table. It tickles me; they could all

keep their important papers in one little old drawer. Everybody had a key to a little drawer. [Laughter] And you know, there wasn't even a place for the Vice President, not even a place.

Even after Abraham Lincoln was assassinated—and before that William Henry Harrison died of a bad cold, because he spoke for 3 hours and a half at his inaugural without a coat—people didn't even think about it. We were just lucky that Theodore Roosevelt turned out to be a great President, after William McKinley was assassinated. And though I love him very much, President Roosevelt, we were just lucky that Harry Truman turned out to be a very great President indeed, because he did not even know about the existence of the atomic bomb when he became the President of the United States in the springtime of 1945.

Now, after that happened, people began to take this job a little more seriously. Before that, people—guys that were running for President just picked somebody for Vice President they thought would balance the ticket, geographically or politically or age-wise or some otherwise.

And if you think about it, it was a crazy waste of potential, right? How would you like to be able to hire somebody, give them a good job, a nice staff, and tell them what to do, and if they had a lot of talent, give them a lot of power, and they'd make you look good? I think these other guys didn't know what they were missing. But I'm just telling you, it didn't happen.

Now, President Eisenhower gave Richard Nixon a little more responsibility. Then President Kennedy gave Lyndon Johnson still more responsibility. He had been the Senate majority leader; he was a man of great experience and knowledge. And Hubert Humphrey had more or less the same role that Lyndon Johnson did.

Then, to be fair, the first big breakthrough came with Jimmy Carter, who made Walter Mondale a genuine partner in the Vice Presidency. They had lunch every week. Walter Mondale could come to any meeting. Vice President Mondale had been in the Senate and worked in Washington. Governor Carter, then, before he was President, had never done that. And they had a fabulous partnership. And to give credit where credit is due, President Reagan followed that model when George Bush, President Bush, became Vice President. And he had about as much of a role in the Reagan/Bush years—often they were doing things I didn't

agree with, but the point is, it was a responsible decision. Ronald Reagan made a responsible decision to let George Bush be a part of that.

So in the whole history of the country, you've got everybody else—Johnson and Nixon, Mondale and Bush, okay? And then here's Gore. This is a matter of historic fact. There has never been a Vice President who has had so much positive impact on the American people as Vice President.

For one thing, as he points out, whenever he votes in the Senate, we win. [Laughter] But far beyond that, let me just tell you a few things. He ran our reinventing Government program. We have the smallest Federal Government in 40 years, and I'll give you 100 bucks if you can name five programs that were eliminated. We eliminated hundreds of them. You haven't missed them, have you? Why? Because we doubled our investment in education; we continued to increase our investment in science and technology and medical research.

He ran our empowerment zone program, that has brought thousands upon thousands of jobs to people and places that were left behind, by creating special tax-incentive zones with special public investments to create more economic opportunity.

He was our principal adviser in telecommunications and technology. And we had a lot to do with the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Since then, there have been hundreds of thousands of jobs created in the high-tech industry. I went to a dinner the other night in New York City with 40 executives of companies that did not exist in 1996, before the telecom bill was signed.

And he fought for the E-rate, which is now giving \$2.2 billion in discounts to school districts, the poorest school districts in this country, to make sure that all of our schools can be hooked up to the Internet. In '94, when we started, we had 16 percent of the classrooms and 3 percent—I mean, 16 percent of the schools and 3 percent of the classrooms with an Internet connection. Today, we have 95 percent of the schools and 75 percent of the classrooms because of the E-rate that Al Gore fought for.

He has managed a lot of our environmental policies—and being criticized by the Republicans for doing that. If we had not demonstrated that you can have cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food, and set aside more land than

anybody but the Roosevelts and still grow the economy, I don't know what it would take to convince people that you can have a strong economy and a good environment. And he deserves a lot of credit for that.

He managed big chunks of our relationship with Russia, our relationship with Egypt, our relationship with South Africa, a lot of the initiatives we took in arms control.

There has never, ever, ever, in the history of the United States, been a person who, as Vice President, had remotely the range of responsibility or positive impact that he has had. There has, therefore, never been a person who was Vice President who, because of that service, was remotely as well-qualified to be President as he is. Now, you need to know that.

And you also need to know that, in my opinion, he really does understand the future. And he knows how to lead us there. Ninety-five percent of the scientists say the climate's warming, and the big oil companies accept it, just about. And a lot of the big companies that emit a lot of greenhouse gases are saying, "We've got to do something about climate change, otherwise it's going to wreck the whole environment of the world and flood island countries and destroy economies." In 1992 Al Gore was showing me his little chart—[laughter]—saying the same thing that everybody else now takes as the conventional wisdom.

If you want to make the most of prosperity in a time of rapid change, you'd better hire somebody who understands the future and knows how to get us there.

Now, I want to make one last point. There will be consequences to these decisions. I think you would all admit there were a few consequences to the decision the American people had to give the Congress, to the Republicans in 1994. There will be consequences.

The public will either choose to continue paying down the debt and to stay with the economic policy that has given us 21 million new jobs and the longest economic expansion in history or to revert to a policy that risks running deficits and drastically underinvesting in education, science and technology, and other things. That's going to happen. Whether people are aware of it, when the decision is made or not is up to you, but it will happen.

There will be a decision, which will either lead to continued improvements in the environment or people who believe that the Federal

Government's got no business doing half of what we've done. And they'll try to undo some of what we've done. A couple of you told me how great you thought that 40 million roadless acres was, that we set aside in the national forests. The Audubon Society says it's one of the most significant things done in the 20th century. It will be history if the other side wins the White House and the Congress, because they've characterized it as a vast land grab. I don't know how you can grab what already belongs to you—these are Federal lands—but they have.

There will be vast consequences in whether we continue to make America the safest big country in the world. You saw where the gentleman from the NRA said the other day that if we lost the White House and they won, the NRA would have an office in the White House. Now, since he's said that, they probably won't do it. That would probably be too embarrassing. But they will have a veto over policy.

You will—you know, I've got to say something about this gun control business. Progressives lose on labels and win on facts. So don't you let anybody talk to you about gun control and all that. You know, they act like—you know, you practically hear vampire music in the background when the other guys talk about this. They talk about the second amendment and its right to keep and bear arms. And I just want to—next time somebody talks to you about that, say, "Listen. The Supreme Court has also given us the right to travel. But when we have seatbelt laws, child safety laws, speed limit laws, and you have to get a driver's license to drive your car, nobody talks about car control." As if it's some—now, if I come get your car and put it in my garage, that's car control. [Laughter] Otherwise, it's highway safety.

This is a huge deal. We can make this country the safest big country in the world and not keep a hunter out of the deer woods or keep anybody from sport shooting. But we have to do sensible, preventive things to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids. If it's important to you, you better manifest that in your election. You better make sure that everybody you know understands that, because there are huge consequences. There are huge consequences.

If you believe that the Supreme Court ought to protect individual liberties, including a woman's right to choose, you need to know that that's at stake in this election. It will stay if

the Democrats win. It will go if the Republicans do. That's what I believe with all my heart. Within 24 months, it's goodbye; it's gone. And I'm old enough to remember what it was like before.

So for all the happy talk, you need to understand that number one, we owe it to the American people to say, "Set your sights high. Aim for the future. Build the future of our dreams for our children." Number two, we've got a candidate who's the best qualified person I can imagine and by far the best Vice President in the history of the country. And number three, there are huge differences in economic policy, crime policy, social policy, environmental policy that will shape America's future. And I haven't even mentioned national security.

We're for a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, like most everybody else in the world. They're not for it. They want to get rid of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. They think all this arms control is an idle—you know, "Why worry about that? We've got more bombs than anybody else, and the Russians can't afford to build any more right now, so just go on." So, I'm just telling you folks, this is a big deal.

The voters have not yet begun to focus on this. They will begin to think more and more about it. They will draw their own conclusions. But my experience over many years, now, has been that the person who wins the election may be determined by what the people think the election is about.

What is the subject of the election? If the people of this country believe it's whether we should be building the future of our dreams for these kids and the millions like them and the millions that are still living in poverty, without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, or anything else—if that's what they think, we win.

If they think, "This is a stroll in the park; this economy's on automatic; nobody could mess it up if they tried. And people say all kinds of things in an election to make promises to these radical interest groups, but maybe they won't happen, and so let's just kind of feel our way through this," who knows what's going to happen?

Clarity, facts, specifics, issues, evidence—those things are our friends. You've got to start asking everybody you know, what do you think this election is about?

So maybe this is too severe a thing for me to say to you after a nice dinner and a funny introduction—and I won twice in Connecticut. And I don't want you to think I'm an ingrate. But I went to all this trouble, and I worked, and I loved every day of it, and I'm not done. I'm going to get a lot of stuff done before I have to leave.

But I want you to understand, this is a millennial election in more than calendar years. This is a profoundly important decision about where we're going as a people. And you can't let anybody think that it's just some ordinary event or that there are no consequences.

I'll close with this. When we celebrated the longest economic expansion in American history last February, I asked my advisers, I said, "Well, when was the last longest economic expansion in history?" You know when it was? Nineteen sixty-one to nineteen sixty-nine.

Scott's 17 years old. When I graduated from high school, I was 17 years old, in the springtime of 1964, in the full bloom of the last longest economic expansion in history. You know what I thought? I thought the sucker would go on forever. [*Laughter*]

Ah, we knew we had civil rights challenges. I thought they'd be settled in the courts and in Congress, not in the streets. I knew we had a few people in Vietnam. I never dreamed that we would have trouble prevailing and that the agony of it would someday tear our country apart and tear my generation apart. We just thought everything was fine.

Four years later, when I was a senior in college and I was fixing to graduate from college—passes like this—it was 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after my President, Lyndon Johnson, could not even run for reelection because this country was torn half in two over Vietnam. And just a couple of months after that, the last longest economic expansion in American history was itself history.

Now, those of us who are old enough to have memories have responsibilities. And I'm here to tell you I've been waiting for 35 years for another chance to do right by our future. And now we have no domestic civil rights struggle that puts millions in the street. Instead we have a million moms that just want our kids to be safe. We have no Vietnam war to divide us

May 17 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

and distract us. And if we make the wrong decisions, we have only ourselves to blame. I'm telling you, this can be the best time in human history.

But this election decision for the Presidency and for Congress will determine what the shape of this country is for decades to come. That's why, if somebody tomorrow asks you why you came here, tell them that's why you came here. And tell them some of the things I've told you tonight. And whatever happens between now and November, don't you get tired. I've been waiting 35 years for this, and I'm not going to see us blow it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Rich and Ellen Richman and their son Scott, who introduced the President; Ronni Ginott, State chair, Women's Leadership Forum; dinner cochairs Braith and Peter Kelly and Bob Rose; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Mayor Dannel P. Malloy of Stamford, CT; State Senator Brian McDermott; and Connecticut State Democratic Party Chair Edward L. Marcus.

Remarks on Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China May 18, 2000

The President. Good morning. It's always good to have Chairman Greenspan back at the White House, and I'm especially pleased that he has come today to join me in voicing his support for permanent normal trade relations with China. We all know that when Chairman Greenspan talks, the world listens. I just hope that Congress is listening today.

Many Members remain undecided, and we are doing everything we possibly can to round up each and every potential vote. I'm encouraged by the vote in the committees in both Houses, including both Republican and Democratic members, to overwhelmingly approve extending permanent normal trade relations with China. This legislation now goes before the full Congress.

All the former Presidents support it, along with former Secretaries of State, Defense, Trade, Transportation, National Security Advisers, Chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, religious leaders, many of the courageous people in China fighting for human rights and the rule of law.

Momentum is building, but we've still got a challenging fight. I thank Chairman Greenspan for coming here today, and I'd like for him to say whatever is on his mind about this issue.

Mr. Chairman.

[At this point, Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say that, first,

I believe that Chairman Greenspan has established a pretty good record for knowing what is in America's economic interest. He has once again reiterated, clearly and unambiguously, that this agreement exchanges membership rights for China in the WTO for economic opportunities for America in China, for American businesses and American workers, without the tariffs and technology transfer requirements and production in China requirements and other requirements which have limited our ability to benefit from their market for too long. So economically, the case is clear and compelling.

But I would also like to emphasize here the national security aspects of this, and the human and political rights aspects. You've heard Chairman Greenspan address the human and political rights aspects, and make the point that increasing access to a market economy increases personal freedom in other ways. I will just cite one example, which is that China has gone from 2 million to 9 million to 20 million Internet users over the last 3 years. And it was exploding again this year. We do not know where it will be next year, but this is a profoundly significant thing.

That's why Martin Lee came all the way from Hong Kong. That's why people who have been, themselves, oppressed in China have pleaded with us to support this, because they know getting into a rules-based system and promoting